
4. LAND USE

LAND USE ISSUES

Towson has undergone dramatic changes as a result of the growth over the last 15 years. It is now an urbanized center, dominated by business, institutions and government. This 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. employment and retail center still does not provide full services for local residents or attractive evening entertainment activities. Mixed use development is encouraged and essential to the core. A blend of commercial, retail and residential uses would be a stimulant for evening activities.

The development of Towson's town center has brought a significant economic infusion to the area and benefit to the County. Economic growth must not be halted. Yet the growth and high density development has also brought changes to the physical environment that raises a complex set of issues and questions.

Development within the town center has occurred without:

- preparing an integrated plan;
- adequately addressing the human scale with respect to buildings and roads;
- adequately considering the influence and impact on the neighboring communities; and
- considering the impact of large scale redevelopment on existing infrastructure.

ELEMENTS OF THE LAND USE PLAN:

- A. Zoning
- B. Land Uses
 - 1. Central Towson Core and surrounding commercial areas.
 - 2. Residential development and East Towson Community Conservation Area.
 - 3. County Government property.
 - 4. Commercial strips extending from the core.
 - 5. Fairmount/Dulaney Valley Area.
 - 6. Baltimore Avenue Area.
 - 7. RO Transition Areas.
- C. Historic Preservation
- D. Economic Development

A. ZONING

The BM-CT standards permit large, tall buildings to be constructed. Issues with respect to human scale, relationships to other buildings and to pedestrians have arisen and should be addressed by the Baltimore County Zoning Regulations (BCZR) as described in Section 5, Urban Design, of this Plan.

The current floor area ratio (F.A.R.) and building height regulations within the BM-CT should remain in place with one exception. This exception is for reduced building height immediately adjacent to the East Towson Enhancement Area.

The proposed Baltimore County Design Review Advisory Panel should make recommendations directly to the Hearing Officer. If the Design Review Panel is not adopted within one year, establish a Towson Design Review Panel consisting of design professionals and community members.

Recommendation: Prepare an amended BM-CT district for Towson to include the following additional standards:

1. Height Restrictions

For parcels adjacent to the East Towson Enhancement Area (See Map 2) along the east side of Virginia Avenue between Towsontown Blvd. and Pennsylvania Ave. and along Pennsylvania Ave. between Virginia Ave. and Fairmount Ave. the maximum building heights are as follows:

- a. 75 ft. for commercial buildings.
- b. 90 ft. for residential buildings.

However, a parcel having an approved County Review Group (CRG) effective as of this date, shall have a height restriction not greater than the height previously approved.

2. Amenity Open Space and Setbacks

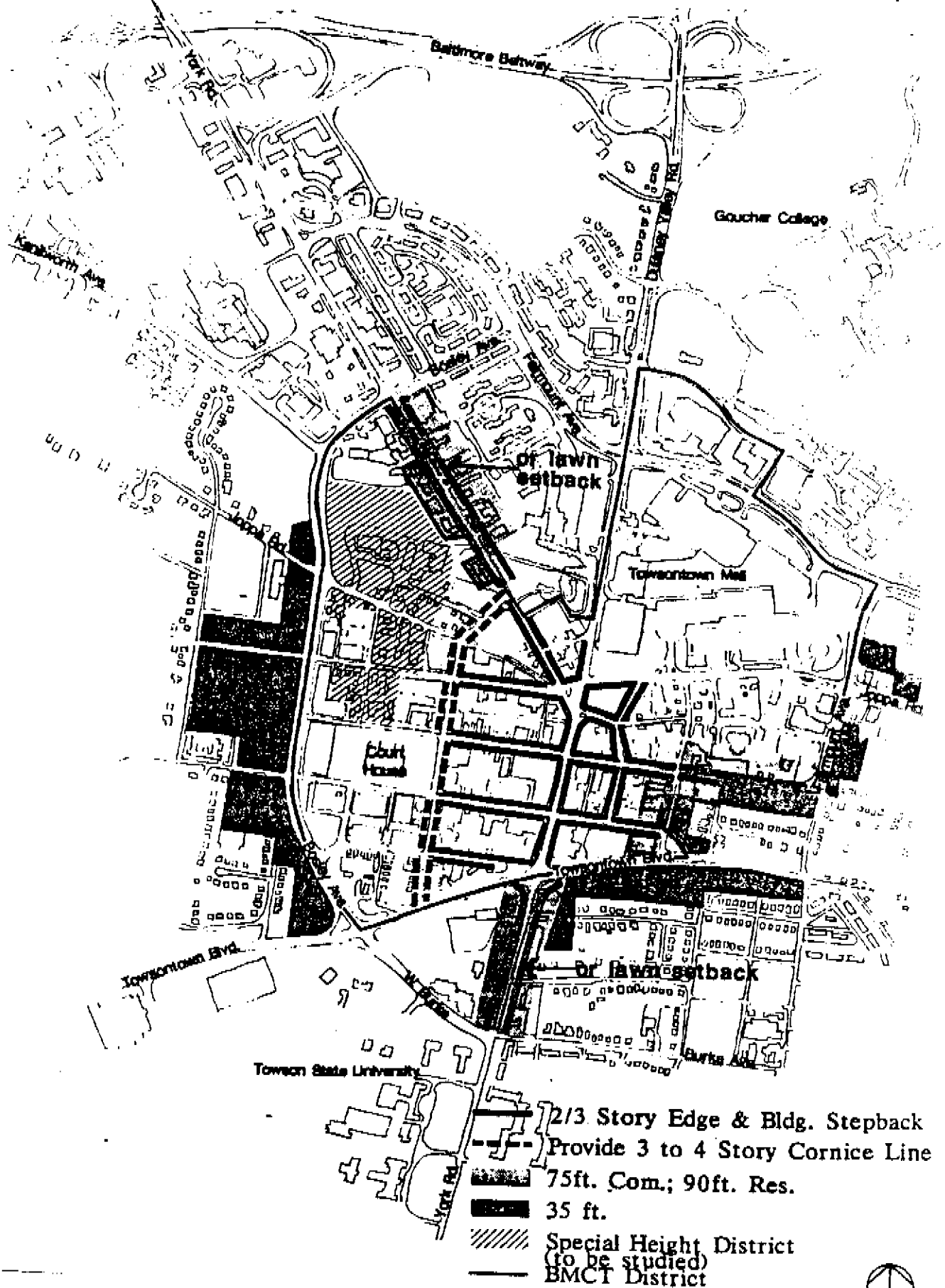
Amenity open space will continue to be required. However, applying the existing standard percentage to all development may not be appropriate to meet the goals of the Open Space Concept Plan that is described in Section 5, Urban Design. The existing requirement needs to be reevaluated to review:

- a. the reasons for the recent variance requests;
- b. the appropriateness of commercial development percentage; and
- c. the appropriateness of the residential development calculation.

The requirement for amenity open space may be changed to clearly define useable open space for a development. In addition, off-site open space improvements within the public right-of-way or within an adjacent park may also be appropriate solutions. It is recommended that amenity open space implement the community's open space plan.

Height Recommendations

Map 2



Generally, amenity open space for each development will be required to include:

- a. streetscape as described in Section 5, Urban Design;
- b. minimum on-site open space to meet the needs of the building users; and
- c. contributions in land, money in lieu of or both to implement the overall open space concept plan.

The intent is to avoid fragmented open space parcels that are not desirable and may not form a cohesive whole. Each stage of a development plan should be self-sufficient for amenity open space.

The front and side yard requirements currently in the zoning should be replaced by the development criteria contained in the Urban Design Section.

Other amenity open space issues which need additional study are:

- a. off-site contribution for public open space and streetscape improvements;
- b. variances for interior amenity open spaces; and
- c. setbacks and streetscape amenities will be required as outlined in the urban design plan.

3. Design Considerations

- a. Projects should be reviewed by a Design Review Panel within the sub-area (design areas) recommendations.

Recommendation: The Comprehensive Manual of Development Policies (CMDP) should be amended to allow for the Design Review Advisory Panel to provide guidelines and to review the following Towson Community Plan areas:

1. The Urban Design Study Area (Map 1);
2. The hospital properties south of the core including St. Joseph Hospital, Greater Baltimore Medical Center, and Sheppard Pratt; and
3. The college campuses of Goucher College and Towson State University; design review of TSU projects would be voluntary.

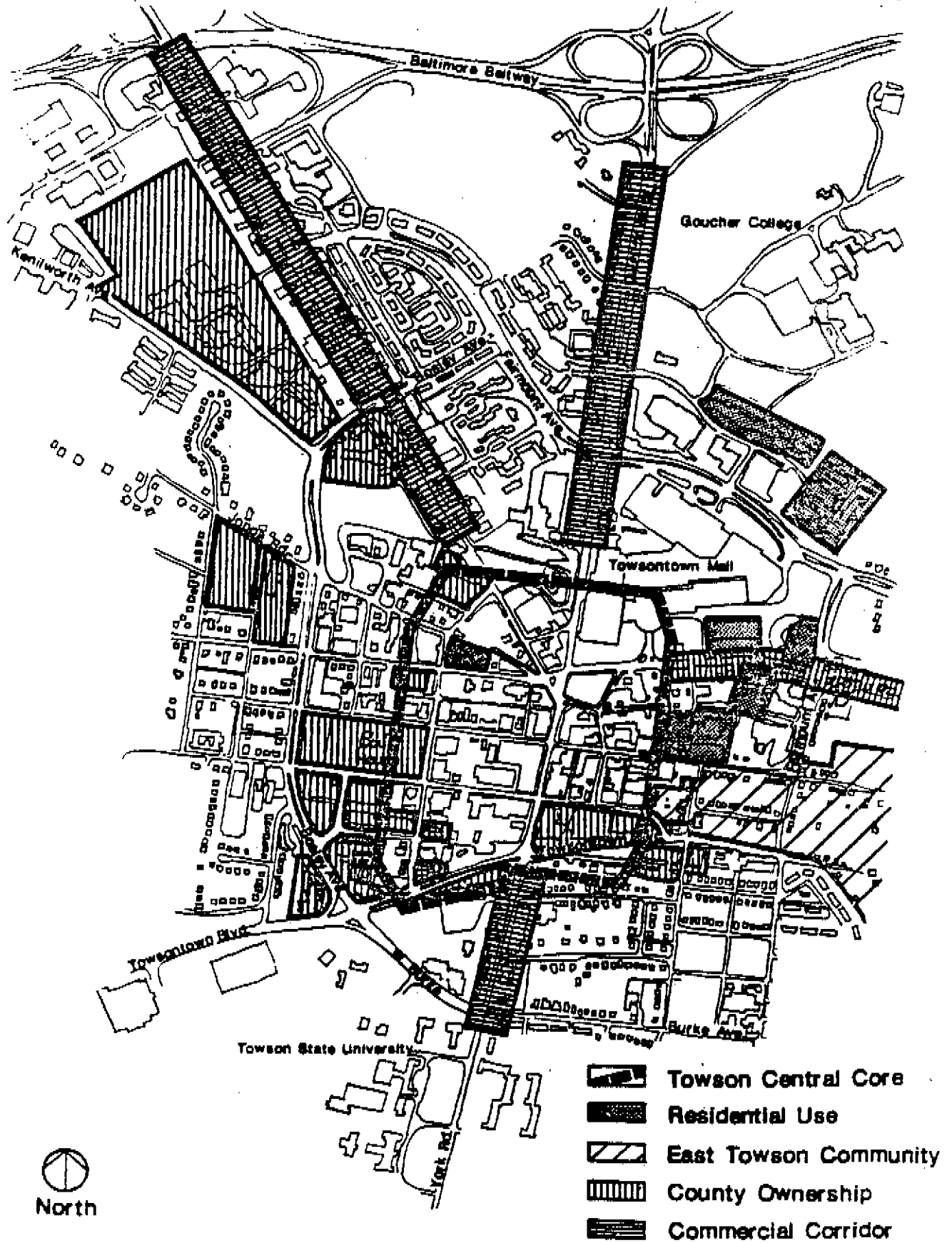
All County Review Group (CRG) projects that have been approved will be allowed to proceed without further review unless changes are requested or the approval period expires.

B. LAND USES

The land use plan within the town center is divided into sub-areas or design areas (Map 5). These sub-areas recognize that there are different activities, needs, relationships to road and pedestrian systems, to the residential communities and to urban

Land Use Structure

MAP 3



design features in Towson. Each area offers different potentials for Towson's future and requires different solutions for design and development.

1. Central Core:

The older shopping district of the 300, 400 and 500 blocks of York Road and the first blocks east and west of York Rd. on Allegheny, Pennsylvania and Chesapeake Avenues need attention. Redevelopment should be encouraged and new construction should be designed to better serve pedestrians to avoid building facades with no windows, doors or design relief. This may include 2 to 3 story street edge with retail uses. Efforts must also be made to preserve and restore the historic facades and structures in this district. Linkage to the new Towson Town Center Mall must also be provided through obvious pedestrian connections, including through the development project that may occur where the temporary park is now located on the northside of Joppa Road.

Recommendation: Create an economically healthy retail, residential and commercial core area.

1. Maintain an active retail area that remains open after 5:00 P.M. and until at least 9:00 P.M.
2. Encourage the expansion of cultural activities in the town center.
3. Intensify efforts to reuse the Hutzler's building.
4. Preclude street level use of parking garages and service areas except for entries and exits.
5. Encourage mixed commercial and residential uses.

Recommendation: Revitalize the older shopping district (the 300, 400 and 500 blocks of York Road and crossing streets of Allegheny, Pennsylvania and Chesapeake Avenues).

1. Design buildings fronting on the 300, 400, 500 blocks of York Road and two blocks east and west of York Road on Allegheny, Chesapeake and Pennsylvania to provide sidewalk level retail or service uses where practical.
2. Utilize streetscape details recommended for Central Towson in the Urban Design Plan. York Road should have all brick sidewalks.
3. Work with property owners and Landmarks Commission to include historic facades and buildings for rehabilitation or re-use where appropriate.
4. Create and maintain strong pedestrian connections and linkages between Towson Town Center Mall and the Central Core.

Recommendation: Eliminate all billboards.

2. Residential Development and East Towson:

Residential construction boomed between 1975 and 1985 in the town center. Except for the Penthouse Condominium and recently sold Burkshire Tower near Towson State University, residential development is concentrated along the Joppa Road. Ridge in the northeast quadrant, north of Pennsylvania Avenue. Residential buildings are also located north of Goucher Boulevard across from the Mall.

Additional residential construction within the town center is highly desirable. A market study focusing on residential development should be initiated with the assistance of the Department of Community Development and the Economic Development Commission to consider various zoning and tax incentives. It is hoped that a non-elderly market can also be attracted. Future construction should be encouraged in proximity to the older shopping district, particularly west of Virginia Avenue, between Chesapeake and Pennsylvania Avenues which would provide an appropriate transition from the East Towson neighborhood. The land area north of Fairmount Avenue and west of Dulaney Valley Road should be — for high density residential redevelopment which may necessitate an adjustment of the Town Center boundary in this area.

Recommendation: Set an aggressive program to attract residential construction within and around the core.

1. Evaluate and target the demand, including an assessment of non-elderly and affordable housing projects.
2. Provide a profile of supply, demand, amenities, etc., required to attract residential uses.
3. Explore the possibility of the Baltimore County Revenue Authority being a partner in a joint venture project.
4. Identify tax deferrals, credits and incentives and zoning mechanisms to facilitate development.
5. Explore the development of the property west of Virginia Avenue between Chesapeake and Pennsylvania for residential, or mixed-use including residential, as a transition from East Towson neighborhood to the core.

The historic East Towson community of single family homes has been jeopardized by the infiltration of commercial uses and intrusion of major roads. The community desires stability and neighborhood preservation. This plan encourages the rehabilitation of its housing stock and the residential development of various in-fill parcels. The plan also addresses transitional heights, uses and setbacks, buffering and potential zoning changes.

Recommendation: Assist East Towson in its efforts to complete and implement its community conservation plan.

1. Provide transitional heights, uses and setbacks for commercial property abutting this community.
2. Encourage residential infill opportunities even though that may require waiver of residential transition areas requirements.
3. Increase residential development through rehabilitation and in-fill construction consistent with community plan.
4. Renovate Carver School for use as community center.

3. County Property:

The County government owns numerous parcels throughout the town center. In addition to the County Office Building, County Courts Building, converted school buildings, and leased space in the Investment Building, there is a repair shop on the south side of Towsontown Boulevard, surplus materials warehouse on Virginia Avenue, the Carver School, and an expansive parking lot on the south side of Chesapeake Avenue. The County needs to prepare a "government campus" master plan and bring alternative proposals before citizens for public review and discussion.

The Court House Square is a pleasantly landscaped open space, but other County properties are not all well maintained. Baltimore County government must address the use and appearance of some of its other property. Priority consideration should be given to the properties in and adjacent to the East Towson neighborhood and to the preparation of a plan for these properties that would also benefit the community.

Recommendation: The Baltimore County government should develop a master plan that would reflect its special role in the town center.

1. Reinforce the campus-like setting of the Court House Square with uniform landscaping and lighting.
2. Identify all County facilities within the area and prepare preservation or redevelopment scenarios for each. Specific consideration should be given to those in the East Towson area such as the surplus stores building, Carver School and the repair shop. The County should work closely with the community to identify better uses for these properties.

4. Commercial Corridors

The commercial corridors, York Road, Dulaney Valley Road, Joppa Road, which lead to Towson should be designated as gateway corridors and incorporate special landscaping and

design treatment. Businesses may need financial assistance to provide improvements and those should be targeted by the Economic Development Commission. This assistance is intended to strengthen the businesses and to establish improved and attractive frontage, landscaping and signage. Sidewalks should be constructed and connected where possible. Commercial activity on the north and south ends of York Road should be enhanced but not expanded into residential areas.

Recommendation: Property and business owners along commercial corridors should, where appropriate, upgrade the appearance of each property to improve the gateway entrances into Towson. The County should prepare a commercial corridor overlay district for the Towson Community Plan core which would:

1. limit the proliferation of signs and reduce the allowable size of signs;
2. intensify a code enforcement program in these areas;
3. establish a continuity of setbacks, buffers and landscaping;
4. commit necessary capital improvement program and operating funds to assist existing businesses interested in upgrading, recognizing the need for flexibility due to the different uses;
5. encourage street level retail and service uses;
6. prevent further commercial intrusion on York Road south of Burke Avenue into residential areas; and
7. retain maximum height established by the existing retail buildings on York Road between Burke Avenue and Towson-town Boulevard.

5. **Fairmount/Dulaney Valley** (Towson Town Center Mall and Edenwald area)

1. Develop north edge of Joppa Road/south side of Towson Town Center Mall as linkage to older shopping district and improve pedestrian connections between each.
2. Maintain predominant residential uses on the west side of Dulaney Valley Road between Fairmount Avenue and the Beltway.

6. **Institutional Towson** (Baltimore Avenue area)

1. Encourage low-scale office uses, and retention of existing residential building character north of the government complex.

7. **RO transition areas**

1. Discourage the future development of Class B office buildings within the RO zones.

2. Convert the old jail to a community service facility such as a cultural arts center, day care facility, elder care facility, or neighborhood activity center.

C. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Many of the older buildings in the town center are significant reminders of the historic development of Towson. With a few exceptions, plans have not been initiated to preserve historic structures and facades or to make them an integral part of Towson's future development.

Mechanisms must be developed to protect Towson's historic structures. Tax benefits, zoning incentives and design review consideration of various easements may be appropriate; the Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) should also be considered. Those buildings that should remain due to their architectural or historic character should be identified. Steps to preserve these structures or facades must be done in conjunction with the respective property owners.

A list of buildings of historic and/or architectural significance has been prepared by staff of the Landmarks Commission and is included in the Appendix on page 100.

Recommendation: Create specific mechanisms for historic preservation and protection of historic facades, structures and sites throughout Towson.

1. Develop a preservation master plan that identifies buildings to be preserved and defines and adopts mechanisms for the preservation of historic structures or facades appropriate to all historic sites in the town center. The plan should consider zoning, taxes, facade easements, and other mechanisms. The plan would be subject to review and approval by the Planning Board and County Council and would become an integral part of the Towson Community Plan when adopted.
2. Work with property owners to identify and select the preferred uses or mechanisms for the individual properties.

D. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The layout of Towson - the patterns of land use - is insignificant if no attractive physical environment is present which would attract people to use and make them comfortable once they are here. The town center should be an interesting and desirable place for people to go after the workday ends. Shops, cultural arts activities and retail uses should extend hours of operation to create more activity in the evenings and on weekends. The Economic Development Commission should perform a marketing study to identify best uses, the proper mix of uses and the integration of uses. Promotional efforts must also be

accelerated, in conjunction with the local civic organizations, residential community representatives, and others to attract and stimulate business activity.

Recommendation: Conduct a marketing study within 12 months after this plan is adopted. The study should evaluate opportunities and constraints on retail, office, entertainment and residential development.

1. Develop a strategy for the support of shops, theatres and retail activity currently not found in the area.
2. Pursue the creation of a community art and cultural center for Towson, possibly in conjunction with Goucher College and Towson State University.
3. Work with Revenue Authority to assemble land for redevelopment within the core.